

## Suggested reading for entrants reading Psychology and Psychology/Philosophy/Linguistics

Congratulations again on your acceptance and we are already planning and looking forward to your arrival in Michaelmas.

Students often contact the college over the summer and ask what preparation we expect of you, and whether reading ahead of your lectures in October would be helpful. The good news is that there are no readings that we expect you to have done and specifically we would like your readings, when they start, to accompany the lectures. So no need to be trying to second guess the coming lectures....

But, I think that you might want to familiarize yourself with general topics in Psychology or Statistics before arriving. This might be particularly true if you feel that there are any gaps in your experience/background knowledge.

Given this, here are my recommendations for the summer for three things to do and keep you thinking.

- 1) Have you ever read an introductory text book in Psychology or Statistics? Choose an Introduction to Psychology text that you find in a library or second hand book shop. Flip through and starting trying to think about your topic more formally. I do think that if your grasp of statistics is weak then reading in statistics will be helpful**

### Psychology

Here are some general Psychology texts but *any* will do

Atkinson, R.L. et al. (2014). *Introduction to psychology* (Thomson Learning).

Gross, R.D. (2010). *Psychology: The science of mind and behaviour* (Hodder & Stoughton)

Hayes, N. (1998). *Foundations of psychology: An introductory text*. (Nelson)

A fun and easy popular science introduction to Psychology

Pinker, S. (1997). *How the Mind Works*. (Allen Lane).

### Statistics

A grasp of elementary algebra, particularly elementary probability theory (combinations and permutations), what is meant by logarithms, powers etc., and some knowledge of elementary coordinate geometry (particularly the equations for curves), elementary set theory and elementary statistics, is useful. If you have little or no statistical background, the following books are recommended:

Graham A. (1992). *Teach yourself statistics*. Hodder and Stoughton [Includes basic maths].

Rowntree D. (1991). *Statistics without tears*. Penguin.

More relevant for the actual material to be covered Statistics Methods and including a tutorial in the programming language R which is freely downloadable is

Field et al., (2012). *Discovering statistics using R*. Sage

This would definitely giving you sufficient training for most of the statistics you will do in your three years here, not just the first term.

- 2) I hope that you read for fun and watch video/movies, and while leisure time is good for turning off from scholarship it is also an important way for seeing and thinking about how psychology relates to the wider world around us. So.....Read books, watch movies, read the internet and consider how psychology is involved.**

### **Movies**

Here are some suggestions pretty much randomly selected from a much larger set of possible entries for movies, here are my thoughts this year, these form my top 10 all time 'psychology' movies, and in historical order are....drum roll please.

**1-Citizen Kane (1941).** Nominated for nine academy awards and winner of one, Orson Welles' masterpiece, still the best movie ever made! Questions of human development, attachment and instrumental control. Turn down the lights watch on a big screen.

**2-The seventh seal (1957)** Ingmar Bergman's often imitated but never equalled tale, questions the meaning of life, god and existence.

**3-A clockwork orange (1971);** Nominated for four academy awards, Stanley Kubrick's disturbing dystopian masterpiece based on Anthony Burgess's linguistically creative 1962 novel. The themes explored by the movie relate specifically to questions of Psychology raised by B.F. Skinner, how is behaviour controlled? A companion reading for the movie other than the Burgess original novel might be Skinner's 1971 book *Beyond freedom and dignity*. For those interested in psycholinguistics, what does the fictional argot Nadsat say about the development of language?

**4-One flew over the cuckoo's nest (1975).** Winner of five academy awards, directed by Milos Forman from Ken Kesey's novel about the nature of mental illness and how society responds to mental illness. Interestingly, Ken Kesey's experiences in a mental health hospital that inspired his book, were themselves the starting point for some of the early experimentation with psychoactive substances and psychedelic experiences chronicled by Tom Wolfe in *The electric Kool-Aid acid test* a terrific novel that follows the exploits of Ken Kesey and his merry pranksters and itself is a wonderfully written book.

**5-Blade Runner (1982).** Nominated for two academy awards. Artificial intelligence? Or artificial life? Do our memories define us? And what is with the origami?

**6-Frances (1982).** Nominated for two academy awards, Jessica Lange is the mercurial actress who is too independent for her own good, at least that is what society thinks. How does society tame the untameable, how do gender roles define people's response to us?

**7-Ground Hog Day (1993).** No academy awards, but retrospectively recognized for a brilliant script and one of top 100 movies ever made. Bill Murray is trapped in a causally predictable world. What is the nature of prediction and causation....was Hume right after all? Do habits allow us time to think about pursuing goals?

**8-Memento (2000).** Nominated for two academy awards. Christopher Nolan's better psychological thriller, follows a man's struggle with the nature of memory.

**9-Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind (2004).** Nominated for two and winner of one academy award, this movie with Kate Winslet and Jim Carrey was written as a screenplay by Charlie Kauffman but inspired by research on behavioural neuroscience research on memory reconsolidation (see Karim Nader, *Nature*, 425, 571-1, 2003), this movie discusses one of the concepts of memory, its permanence and its flexibility.

**10-Still Alice (2014).** Winner for best female actor academy award by Julianne Moore, this is a harrowing story of a psycholinguist's descent into dementia.

Optional Assignment: Having watched one of these movies, how about writing a 1000 word essay answering this question? Ultimately, a person cannot escape their biological nature. How are the characters in your movie constrained by their brain? Send it to me and I will

send you some comments or we can discuss when you arrive.

Optional-optional assignment: If none of these films catch your fancy how about winner of two academy awards Pinocchio (1940). Disney's fable of the wood puppet who wants to be a boy. Essay question "What would Sigmund Freud make of Pinocchio?"

- 3) **We all live on the internet and through connected media. Email is the bane of our existence but it is important to harness email to our advantage. One of the problems you will encounter is that with Oxford's complete access to all the books and journals that have ever been published is how to narrow your attention and select from this resource. A starting point is to sign up to the best journals for table of contents alerts, I encourage you to visit some of these journal websites and sign up for contents alerts, minimally visit the site and bookmark them and other psychology related web pages.**

#### **Journal Mailing Lists**

General: *Nature*, *Science*, *Scientific American* and *New Scientist* are journals in which a number of articles on psychological topics appear. Back copies of the *Scientific American* contain excellent articles on a wide range of scientific topics, and there are several collected volumes of published articles.

Even better is that it is often free to join the mailing lists of these journals to receive alerts when papers are published. You will receive emails with up to date content. Once you are here in Oxford you will easily be able to download the papers without charge. I suggest you join the mailing lists now and get used to reading the abstracts that are sent to you, don't worry that you might be unable to read the full articles until you get here.

Specific: More detailed and explanatory papers on a full range of psychological issues also appear in *Psychological Review*, *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* as well as *Topics in Cognitive Science*, although these journals are more advanced, you will soon be reading papers from these journals so why not start reading their table of contents?

#### **The British Psychological Society**

The British Psychological Society publish and distribute a wide range of books and booklets related to psychology, ranging from the types of careers people move on to after their psychology degree to booklets on specific areas of psychology. For example, *How About Psychology?*, might give you some ideas about what to do with your degree, and interesting piece from people who have used psychology degrees in a variety of ways, and *Career Choices in Psychology* details a range of professional careers in Psychology.

[www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk)

#### **The Experimental Psychology Society**

Finally, the Experimental Psychology Society is the prestigious UK scientific body representing researchers, academics and students. The society publishes the *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology* monthly presenting scientific papers on a wide range of Psychology topics as well as a range of conferences and workshops and funding support for students in the later stages of studies.

[www.eps.ac.uk](http://www.eps.ac.uk)

#### **Apps**

You will need familiarization with neural anatomy. There are several free apps that allow you to explore the brain and its major areas that you can download to your phones, tablets etc. and refer to on a regular basis. Here are two that were available until recently, I suspect that there might be others. You will need to remember the names and regions of the brain and this is a free starting point.

Brain Tutor

3D Brain

I am looking forward to seeing you in October, have a great summer.

Sincerely,

Robin A. Murphy, Associate Professor of Experimental Psychology